

# Inscriptions

– contemporary thinking on art, philosophy and psycho-analysis –  
<https://inscriptions.tankebanen.no/>

**Title:** Love in the smooth flow of becoming: on the history of the event and the event as history

**Author:** Avron Kulak

**Section:** Academic articles

**Abstract:** Beginning with Badiou's insistence that Christianity deploys all of the parameters of the event, I examine how Nietzsche, Derrida, and Kierkegaard help us understand the relationship between the event and biblical principles. Nietzsche aligns the event with the command of conscience to recreate our values from nothing prior, also insisting that such a conscience is created by Christianity. For Derrida only the event as the irruption of the absolutely new makes possible the just decision that must come into existence as if nothing of the law previously existed. While Nietzsche and Derrida implicitly invoke (presuppose) the doctrine of creation from nothing, Kierkegaard shows creation to be the ontological expression of the biblical command to love that, itself created from nothing prior – from neither immediate self- nor immediate preferential love – provides the critical point of view from which to appropriate and espouse the smooth flow of becoming.

**Keywords:** event; Christianity; Kierkegaard; Nietzsche; Derrida

Copyright © 2022 Kulak.

**Correspondence:** Avron Kulak, e: [akulak@yorku.ca](mailto:akulak@yorku.ca).

**Received:** 11 October, 2021.

**Accepted:** 9 November, 2021.

**Published:** 15 January, 2022.

**How to cite:** Kulak, Avron. "Love in the smooth flow of becoming: on the history of the event and the event as history." *Inscriptions* 5, no. 1 (January 2022): 46–55.

This is an open-access article distributed under the terms of the [Creative Commons Attribution 4.0 International License](https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/) (CC BY). The use, distribution or reproduction in other forums is permitted, provided the original author(s) and the copyright owner(s) are credited and that the original publication in this journal is cited, in accordance with accepted academic practice. No use, distribution or reproduction is permitted which does not comply with these terms.

# Love in the smooth flow of becoming: on the history of the event and the event as history

Avron Kulak<sup>1</sup>

## Abstract

Beginning with Badiou's insistence that Christianity deploys all of the parameters of the event, I examine how Nietzsche, Derrida, and Kierkegaard help us understand the relationship between the event and biblical principles. Nietzsche aligns the event with the command of conscience to recreate our values from nothing prior, also insisting that such a conscience is created by Christianity. For Derrida only the event as the irruption of the absolutely new makes possible the just decision that must come into existence as if nothing of the law previously existed. While Nietzsche and Derrida implicitly invoke (presuppose) the doctrine of creation from nothing, Kierkegaard shows creation to be the ontological expression of the biblical command to love that, itself created from nothing prior – from neither immediate self- nor immediate preferential love – provides the critical point of view from which to appropriate and espouse the smooth flow of becoming.

**Keywords:** event; Christianity; Kierkegaard; Nietzsche; Derrida

The reflections that follow are dedicated to responding to two questions: how does the event puncture the smooth flow of becoming? and what is the event in which we become ourselves?<sup>2</sup> In order to respond to these questions I shall examine how Badiou, Nietzsche, Derrida, Kierkegaard, and Hegel help us to espouse the event as a moment of appropriation and becoming. In paying special attention to Kierkegaard I shall argue, overall, that the ontology and ethics of the event have their historical roots in the biblical traditions and, more specifically, that the ontology of creation *ex nihilo*, whose ethical expression is the command to love the other as oneself, is the event in which we live.

To begin, I shall provide a summary of the concept of the event as it is articulated by Alain Badiou in *Being and Event*, especially as it relates to the principles of Christianity.

Badiou links the biblical traditions to the event when he writes that “at the heart of Christianity there is that event – situated, exemplary – that is the death of the son of God on the cross,” adding that “All the parameters of the doctrine of the event are thus disposed within Christianity; amidst, however,” he cautions, “the remains of an ontology of presence – with respect to which I have shown, in particular, that it diminishes the concept of infinity.”<sup>3</sup> Citing Lacan's claim that, even if no religion were

<sup>1</sup>York University, Canada.

<sup>2</sup>These are the two questions through which Ereignis introduced the theme of its conference on Being and Event, held in June, 2020.

<sup>3</sup>Badiou, *Being and Event*, 212.

true, Christianity nevertheless comes closest to the question of truth, Badiou writes that “in Christianity and in it alone it is said that the essence of truth supposes the evental ultra-one, and that relating to truth is not a matter of contemplation – or immobile knowledge – but of intervention.”<sup>4</sup> Yet, for Badiou, the essence of what he calls the evental ultra-one is, ultimately, or from the beginning, the Two, the division of the divine One into Father and Son, a division that “definitively ruins any recollection of divine transcendence into the simplicity of a Presence.”<sup>5</sup>

In light of Badiou’s insistence that the division of the divine One into Two is the evental essence of Christian truth, we shall return to the question of whether – and, if so, how and why – Christianity, as transcending the simplicity of an ontology of presence, is to be understood as bearing the remains of that presence. For the moment, however, it is important to see that what the event entails for Badiou is the revealing of marginalized groups whose existence is hidden, prejudicially, by the dominant social order that he also calls the One – but the One that will not tolerate an other. The passage from the dominant social order to the event thus occurs in absolute excess of that dominant order, an order that views that which it attempts to hide as what Badiou, in recalling the language of the doctrine of creation *ex nihilo*, calls the void or chaos, which, for him, despite its hiddenness, remains omnipresent.

That the event, in its omnipresence, is created from nothing – from nothing of the accepted reality of the dominant social order but from what that dominant order, the One, views as the chaotic void – means, for the One, that “It is necessary to prohibit that catastrophe of presentation which would be its encounter with its own void,” an encounter that would lead to its ruin. The omnipresence of the void,

however, ensures that it is impossible for the One to circumscribe what it views as the chaos belonging to it in the effort to prohibit it from appearing. Because the essence of the One is to attempt to determine all that belongs to and follows from it – all that is to be counted as part of its being – the event interrupts and suspends the determinism that characterizes the One, with the symbol of that interruption appearing, for Badiou, as the miracle: the event is the miracle – the miracle is the event – in which the interventional capacity of those who are marginalized comes into existence.

To the above Badiou adds that, while he is rarely suspected of harboring Christian zeal, “It is too clear to me that, beyond Christianity, what is at stake here is the militant apparatus of truth: the assurance that it is in the interpretative intervention that it finds its support, that its origin is found in the event,” as well as in the ongoing “will to *draw out* its dialectic” and “the calm willingness to change the world and to universalize its form.”<sup>6</sup> The event, then, brings the time of the One, the time of the dominant social order, within a principle utterly distinct from that order’s efforts to repress or suppress the marginalized groups whose existence draws out the dialectic of Christianity through the intervention that seeks to make the marginalized equal.

Yet, if Christianity has its origin in – if Christianity is an expression of – the event as the militant apparatus of truth that supports the dignity, the absolute equality, of all, then in what does the event have its origin?

In order to begin to respond to this question – and, at the same time, to indicate some (but only some) of the labyrinthine turns that the answer has taken throughout the history of western thought – I now turn to Nietzsche and Derrida. How, to repeat the questions with which this study opened, does the event punc-

<sup>4</sup>Badiou, *Being and Event*, 212.

<sup>5</sup>Badiou, *Being and Event*, 213.

<sup>6</sup>Badiou, *Being and Event*, 222.

ture the smooth flow of becoming and what is the event in which we become ourselves?

In *The Gay Science* Nietzsche insists that becoming the selves we are is a command of what he develops as the intellectual conscience, the command to become the exceptional individuals who, by determining all of our values anew, reject the herd morality that reduces us to self-alienated, dispensable parts of the whole. It is in re-evaluating all herd values that we puncture the smooth flow of becoming, that we become the exceptional beings who are indispensable and who, in viewing all others also as indispensable, also as the exception – holding them, in turn, accountable for their exceptionality – earn, Nietzsche writes in the *Genealogy of Morals*, “the right to make promises.”<sup>7</sup> This is a right, Nietzsche insists, that presupposes a “real memory of the will,” “an active desire to ordain the future in advance,” so that time becomes circumscribed within an unbroken “chain of the will.”<sup>8</sup> Yet – and perhaps not surprisingly, given that to determine all of our values anew is, for Nietzsche, to determine them from nothing prior, from nothing that belongs to the herd – he also insists that the conscience of the exception is a creation of, that it follows from the history of, the biblical traditions: the conscience of the indispensable exception effects, he holds, the refinement of biblical morality into “intellectual cleanliness at any price,” a cleanliness that forbids itself “the lie involved in belief in God.”<sup>9</sup> How, then, are we to understand the link that Nietzsche establishes between the origin of conscience in biblical principles and those individuals who become the selves they are, become the exception, by going beyond good and evil – by going beyond the tradition from which comes our very concept of intellectual conscience?

Following Nietzsche’s development of the intellectual conscience as that through which we determine our values anew, thereby earning the right to make promises, Derrida argues, in the *Right to Philosophy*, that the event is the irruption of the absolutely new, that which makes possible a promise that is committed in advance to a second, reaffirming promise. Because it is only the irruption of the absolutely new that allows for “an event and a promise that would constitute [both] the democratic”<sup>10</sup> and the possibility of justice, the event of a just decision must come into existence, Derrida writes in *The Force of Law*, “as if, at the limit, the law did not exist previously – as if the judge himself invented it in each case” in “the reaffirmation and the new and free confirmation of its principle.”<sup>11</sup> Only in this way can it be distinguished from mere unthinking calculation (a law of agreement). How, then, are we to understand the indication on the part of Derrida that the events of democracy and justice come into existence from nothing prior – from nothing other than the history of the principle that it freely confirms (validates) as its own? In inscribing (the origin of) temporality within the relationship of event and promise, does he implicitly and silently invoke the ontology and ethics of creation from nothing?

I introduce the question of the event through Badiou, Nietzsche, and Derrida in order to highlight both the insights and the unanswered questions that the three thinkers bequeath to their readers, questions to which I believe Kierkegaard provides an answer in his explication of the biblical command to love as created from nothing prior – from neither immediate self-love nor immediate preferential love – and as that which provides for single individuals a critical point of view from which to appropri-

<sup>7</sup>Nietzsche, *On the Genealogy of Morals*, 57 (Second Essay, Section 1).

<sup>8</sup>Nietzsche, *On the Genealogy of Morals*, 58 (Second Essay, Section 1).

<sup>9</sup>Nietzsche, *On the Genealogy of Morals*, 160 (Third Essay, Section 27).

<sup>10</sup>Derrida, *On the Right to Philosophy*, 70–71.

<sup>11</sup>Derrida, “The Force of Law,” in *Acts of Religion*, 251.

ate and espouse the smooth flow of becoming.

It is critical to see that Kierkegaard begins his explication of biblical principles by distinguishing them from those of the ancient Greek world, arguing, in *The Concept of Irony*, that “The similarity between Christ and Socrates consists essentially in their dissimilarity.”<sup>12</sup> In *Works of Love* Kierkegaard expands on this essential dissimilarity when he writes that it was impossible to form a conception of the state of the ancient Greek world prior to the command to love having come into existence. Why, then, does Kierkegaard insist that the ancient Greeks could form no conception of their own world – that they could form no conception of themselves?

Kierkegaard opens *Philosophical Fragments* by examining Socrates’ response to the question of whether the truth can be learned, citing what Socrates calls in the *Meno* the pugnacious proposition that one can seek neither what one does not know nor what one does know: one cannot seek what one does not know, since one does not know what to seek; and one cannot seek what one does know, since one already knows it. The implication of the pugnacious proposition is that all seeking in the Greek world is done in ignorance: to seek is to show that you are ignorant of the impossibility of seeking. As Kierkegaard then notes with the nimblest of ironic touches, Socrates “solves” the contradiction inherent in the ancient Greek notion of seeking through the idea of recollection, in light of which, Socrates claims, one has known the truth from eternity – the truth resides in the immortal soul – but in such a way that, yet again, it cannot be sought in temporal existence. The result is the absolute opposition between soul and body, between the eternal and the temporal, between being and becoming, between truth and existence. In the *Republic* Socrates rearticulates the opposition between truth and existence as the divided line be-

tween the unqualified knowledge of the forms that is never available to human consciousness and the qualified knowledge of the appearances that is the limit of human consciousness. Yet because, for Socrates, nothing incomplete or qualified – the appearances – is the measure of anything complete – the forms – the contradiction in which he finds himself immersed is that all discourse about the soul, the eternal, or unqualified knowledge of the forms is always presented from the qualified side of the temporal or the appearances – and thus has no validity. The consequence, he explicitly claims, is that the ancient Greeks have absolutely no knowledge of the good, without which, he insists, all other knowledge is rendered worthless, since the worth of all things is known only in relation to the knowledge of the good. Thus, in describing the ascent beyond the line that divides form and appearance, Socrates repeats the contradictions inherent in his discourse on seeking (and) knowledge when he argues that any conception of the intelligible world of the forms begins with and is modeled on the sensible world of appearances: the intelligible, that is, must be made intelligible on analogy with the sensible, yet the sensible is not the measure of – it cannot speak to the nature of – the intelligible. The very structure of ancient Greek thought is, Kierkegaard asks us to see, self-contradictory, self-eviscerating.

Kierkegaard further argues (in *The Sickness Unto Death* and *The Concept of Anxiety*) that, corollary to the non-existence of the neighbor, there exists in the ancient Greek world neither the consciousness of sin nor the concrete notion of freedom. He thereby asks us to see, together with thinkers such as Auerbach, Carse, de Rougemont, Girard, Driver, and Vernant, that the ancient Greeks lack the concepts of agency, will, responsibility, and obligation that constitute single individuality. As we see in the tale of Er – the myth with

<sup>12</sup>Kierkegaard, *The Concept of Irony*, 14.

which Plato concludes the *Republic* – the endless series of reversals in identity suffered by the soul in death show that the concept of an enduring, principled, single individuality is absent in the ancient Greek world. It is Christianity, Kierkegaard shows, that invents the depths of subjectivity that make actual those individuals who, without losing the connection to human finitude, are faced with addressing the complex connections between the infinite and the finite, since it is here that we find the coming into existence of the subject who is endowed with, and who is thus responsible for, the attributes of the creator. More than this, in insisting on both the distinction and the relationship between the kingdom of God and the human realm such that the former is to be found nowhere outside the latter – the kingdom of God, Jesus is clear, is in the midst of us – Christianity provides the fundamental principles of resistance to the political when the political is untrue to its origin in the idea that, because all human beings are created in the image of God, all are created equal, an idea on which the constitutions, the event and the promise, of our democracies are founded. Where the falsification of what is fundamental to Christianity takes hold, then, the result is the movement that we see threatening so much of the western world today, the disruption of the connections between the kingdom of God and the human realm, a disruption that bespeaks what Kierkegaard calls Christendom, which he distinguishes absolutely from Christianity: Christendom, he is clear, is the rationalization of paganism as Christianity and is characterized by a hypocritical piety that generates idols – hierarchies and walls – in order to demarcate a so-called us and a so-called them, with the latter then prejudicially marginalized.

In light of the above it is critical to be clear, then, before moving on, that the critique that I have developed to this point is not aimed at the ancient Greeks. The point of exposing the self-contradictions inherent in ancient Greek

thought is ultimately to help us understand how and why Kierkegaard develops his critique of Christendom, of those who rationalize paganism as Christianity – that is, of those who attempt to reduce Christianity to paganism, which the ancient Greeks, already being pagan, could not do: because the ontological, epistemological, and ethical principles of Socrates provided no basis in light of which he could locate the truth as his own standard, and because truth, to cite Kierkegaard citing Spinoza in *Philosophical Fragments*, is the standard both of itself and of what is false, Socrates did not have the option of reducing his thought to – he, unlike we, could not be held responsible for – Christendom.

To understand the event as having its roots in the biblical traditions it is crucial to grasp, then, two ideas arising from the insistence on the part of Socrates that neither he nor his interlocutors possess any knowledge of the form of the good, any knowledge of the good in itself. First, since the good in itself is conceived by the ancient Greeks as the telos of which they remain ignorant, the nature of the self is, for them, to be directed by an end that remains unknown to the one so directed. Second, corollary to the epistemological claims of Socrates is the ethical claim that, as he and his interlocutors agree in the *Symposium*, love is lack: just as one cannot seek either what one does know or what one does not know, one cannot possess what one desires and one cannot desire what one possesses. Love, because it is lack, has no content, despite the *Symposium*'s rhetoric of the gradual ascent to the form of beautiful, a rhetoric that is indistinguishable from the self-contradictory depiction of the ascent beyond the divided line and in light of which Kierkegaard insists that no one in the ancient Greek world loved the neighbor, for no one there suspected the neighbor's existence. The reason, then, that the ancient Greeks never claim to possess knowledge of the good is because they do not conceive the neighbor as the



one true, unqualified good of existence.

Because, then, the good, the realm of being, is conceived by Socrates as the telos of which the self remains ignorant and that never enters the temporality of appearance, the realm of becoming, *there is no event in the ancient Greek world*, nothing that punctures what is for them not the smooth but the unknowable flow of becoming: where the good of existence is subject to a telos that never enters the realm of becoming, there is no promise that can be made, no yes that presupposes and engages a second yes. Since becoming, which falls on the side of the divided line that Socrates calls the incomplete, can be grasped only from the side of being, not only is there no event in the ancient Greek world but there is also no becoming the self one is.

The event would thus be that which, in puncturing the smooth flow of becoming, allows us to suspend the good conceived as the unknowable, universal telos of human existence. The suspension of a telos that subjects individuals to a universal ethos in relation to which they have no judgment (what Nietzsche in *The Gay Science* calls the law of agreement of the herd) is, of course, what Kierkegaard, in *Fear and Trembling*, calls faith (and what Nietzsche calls the intellectual conscience). It is faith, for Kierkegaard, that, in suspending (re-evaluating) the ethical telos that annuls the individual's singularity, allows for what he calls the incommensurability – the incomparability – of all human beings. That the value of a human being is not to be derived on the basis of a person's commensurability with – that is, through comparison with – another human being means that the event is the coming into existence of what Kierkegaard calls a new, paradoxical ethics, in light of which all human beings are to be accorded the dignity of having absolute, rather than relative, value. If this is not faith, Kierkegaard writes, then faith has never existed because it has always existed. In being brought into existence by the individ-

ual who respects the incommensurability of all, faith has an origin that is not merely temporal, when the temporal is comprehended merely as natural chronology. Rather, the movement, the decision, of faith, as what Derrida calls the irruption of the absolutely new – if it has always existed, it never existed – brings into existence the principles by which temporality is to be lived by the exceptional single individual.

In light of Kierkegaard's allowing us to trace the event to its source in biblical principles, there are three further points I wish to make.

First, when Kierkegaard argues that only the command to love allows us to comprehend and interpret both our own world and the world of the ancient Greeks, he indicates that the biblical concept of love is both historical and hermeneutical, for it is only in light of that command that we can develop a notion, an understanding, of history: on the one hand, we must develop an understanding of the essential dissimilarity between ancient Greek and biblical thought; second, we must develop an understanding of the fundamental principles that anchor our history and that, in order to avoid conflating ancient Greek and biblical thought, we must reinvent as if nothing of those principles previously existed, for what always has been never has been. We must therefore account not only for the history of the event but also for the event *as* history. It is because the event, in suspending teleology – in suspending all determinism – not only is historical but also comprises history that it provides us with a conception of human temporality that exceeds, that supplements, the simple progress from beginning to end of natural chronology. In the terms of *Philosophical Fragments*, the event is that love becomes both the basis and the goal, the beginning and end, of existence. In light of the event, we thus move not to an end that is the blind product of its blind beginning but from, within, and towards what Kierkegaard calls the equality and genuine contemporaneity of all human beings.

Second, it is precisely this notion of the event as history that Hegel advances when, anticipating Kierkegaard, he writes in *The Philosophy of History* that the concept of love brought into existence by the biblical tradition is both “the goal and the starting point of History.”<sup>13</sup> Hegel is also clear, in the *Lectures on the Philosophy of Religion*, that creation “is not an *actus* that happened once,” for “what takes place in the idea is an *eternal* moment, an eternal determination of the idea” in which God’s act of creation involves, in the beginning, the positing of an other whose content must be recognized – loved – by God as divine.<sup>14</sup> That the ontology of creation and the ethics of the command to love the other as oneself are expressions of one another is then acknowledged by Hegel when he adds that the idea that God is love is made possible only because love is both a distinguishing of two and the recognition by both that they have their self-consciousness only in the other.

Yet, because creation, properly comprehended, expresses the positing and recognition of the other as oneself – Hegel writes that the vitality and spirit of God as creator is, from the very beginning, to posit an other and to make the content of the other the divine: we are created in the image of God – there is no remnant of an ontology of presence in Christianity. Rather, the remnant of an ontology of presence in either of the biblical traditions – the creation of a divided line separating human being from divine being, with the latter understood as known only in itself and thus beyond human knowledge – is, as Kierkegaard allows us to see, the conflation of the biblical traditions with ancient Greek thought, the reduction of biblical principles to ancient Greek thought: the ontology of presence in Christianity is the product of what Kierkegaard develops as Christendom. It is because the biblical traditions

divide, in the beginning, the origin between self and other that Badiou writes, as we have seen, that “The ultimate essence of the eventual ultra-one is the Two, in the especially striking form of a division of the divine One – the Father and the Son – which, in truth, definitively ruins any recollection of divine transcendence into the simplicity of a Presence” and assures that the concept of infinity is not diminished in Christianity.<sup>15</sup> Thus, when Badiou insists, to recall the beginning of this study, that the heart of Christianity is constituted by the exemplary event of the death of the son of God on the cross, in light of which all the parameters of the doctrine of the event are contained within Christianity, he returns us to Hegel’s explication of the meaning of crucifixion and resurrection. For Hegel, while the death of Christ at first seems to have the frightful implication that all that is thought to be eternal and true is not, a reversal takes place: Christ is resurrected and finitude, of which death is the most complete proof, is shown not to exhaust the truth of humanity. Further, because Christ is innocent – he died not for his sins but for ours – his death bespeaks infinite love: it is thus love as infinite, the recognition that we have our self-consciousness only in the other, that posits finitude as not proper to our being; it is through love that we not only puncture the smooth flow of becoming but also transcend the finite immediacies that comprise the simplicity of presence.

It is also worth recognizing that, despite the event often being conceived as a critique of the modern notion of the subject, Kant develops his idea of the rational subject as the one who distinguishes – who must distinguish – between subjects and objects, persons and things, dignity and price, in light of which we are enabled, he writes, always to begin with our end and to end where we begin, with the auton-

<sup>13</sup>Hegel, *The Philosophy of History*, 319.

<sup>14</sup>Hegel, *Lectures on the Philosophy of Religion*, Volume III, 275.

<sup>15</sup>Badiou, *Being and Event*, 213.



omy of every individual. It is thus critical to recall that in the *Grounding for the Metaphysics of Morals* Kant is clear that love and reason are to be understood in precisely the same way – that love is critique – and also that the concept of autonomy, in being distinguished by Kant from both inclination (as the sacrifice of the other to the self) and blind faith in examples of morality (as the sacrifice of the self to the other), is a concept of relationship that binds self and other together under the imperative to act from, and accord to each, the dignity of having absolute value. The coming into existence of Kantian subjects who are able to suspend teleology and end where they begin is the event.

Third, the paradoxical temporality of the event that is articulated by Kierkegaard in *Fear and Trembling* – if the event has always existed, it has never existed – is complemented by a second formulation in his *Concluding Unscientific Postscript*. In writing that love is the change of the eternal – that it is an act not that happens once but within which we abide – Kierkegaard adds that the eternal has not always been but that once it is, it must always have been. It is these two paradoxes of time advanced by Kierkegaard – if it always has been, it never has been; but as soon as it is, it must always have

been – that bespeak the concept of the event as history, the idea that the single individual has a history only in light of a beginning that is not given but that is chosen belatedly. Yet, that we begin belatedly with the event – that we enter our lives always belatedly, that we are always in the process of catching up with ourselves, of becoming the selves we are – also means that there is nothing prior to the event, nothing prior to love, that even one's history prior to the event exists only within the context of and can be comprehended only in light of the transformation wrought by the change of the eternal. In the event, the belated becomes the prior. Nietzsche expresses the Kierkegaardian double paradox of historical self-consciousness when he writes that the intellectual conscience, which leads to the recognition that the God of teleology is dead,<sup>16</sup> both exists and is yet to come, which Derrida expresses in the idea that the structure of justice involves the supplement: it has always already arrived and yet is always to come. For Derrida, this structural *différance* is understood as the guarantor of both the justice to be accorded to “the singularity of the other,” in light of which, he holds, “deconstruction would always begin to take shape,”<sup>17</sup> and the deconstruction of “all presumption of a determining certainty of a present justice,”

<sup>16</sup>In aphorism #125 of *The Gay Science* Nietzsche has the madman exclaim that we have murdered God. Nietzsche then expands on the murder of God when he writes in aphorism #357 that “what really triumphed over the Christian God” is “Christian morality itself, the concept of truthfulness that was understood ever more rigorously, the father confessor's refinement of the Christian conscience... into intellectual cleanliness at any price.” Yet, what constitutes intellectual cleanliness – what Nietzsche elsewhere calls the intellectual conscience – is, he continues, the decision to cease “Looking at nature as if it were proof of the goodness and governance of a god; interpreting history in honor of some divine reason, as a continual testimony of a moral world order and ultimate moral purposes... as if everything were providential, a hint...” That is, the God who is dead is the God who leaves human beings with nothing but the idea that all is to be understood as following divine reason in the historical unfolding of providence – nothing but the hint that history, despite what Nietzsche is clear is its ungodly actualities, is gradually moving towards a divine end in relation to which we remain ignorant (the ignorant means towards the divine end). This is the God not of Christianity but of Christendom's conflation of ancient Greek and biblical thought, the God who, as Kierkegaard writes in *Fear and Trembling*, is not the God of Abraham but the teleological God of the ethical in response to whom individuals must annul their singularity – the God with whom we never “enter into relation,” the God whom we understand to be divine only “in a totally abstract sense” as the “invisible vanishing point” of existence, the God who is “an impotent thought” (68).

<sup>17</sup>Derrida, *Specters of Marx*, 28.

<sup>18</sup>Derrida, “The Force of Law,” in *Acts of Religion*, 254.

a deconstruction of finite certitude that “operates on the basis of an ‘idea of justice’ that is infinite,”<sup>18</sup> thereby guarding against the dogmatic slumbers with which our history is beset. Because “Any history worthy of the name can be neither saturated nor closed,”<sup>19</sup> Derrida writes, “deconstruction never proceeds without love.”<sup>20</sup> Yet, it is because love is not merely given that Nietzsche writes in *The Gay Science* that we must learn to love, which we can do only if we begin by opening ourselves to the other, by approaching the other with, he writes, “our good will, patience, fairmindedness, gentleness, and hospitality.”<sup>21</sup> One can learn to love, then, only by beginning lovingly, by moving from, within, and towards the love, the justice, to be accorded to the singularity of the other.

Nietzsche never resolves the difficulty involved in the combination of his call to go beyond good and evil and his recognition that the intellectual conscience through which we re-evaluate our values has its roots in the biblical tradition. He never recognizes that every attempt he makes to go beyond biblical thought is rooted in and thus returns him to biblical thought; he is never able to acquiesce in – to cope with – his own insights. Derrida never resolves the conundrum of whether the Abrahamic religions are absolute events that reveal universal possibilities or whether they presuppose, in Heideggerian fashion, a prior ontological ground on the basis of which they come into existence. Yet, in holding open the possibility of the latter, he risks reinstating the transcendental signified that his own insights led him brilliantly to deconstruct. Kierkegaard is not without his problems – his belief, for example, that, even though Christianity has put an end to all caste systems, women are equal to men in the eyes of God but not in the world, that Christianity does not come into existence

to change the world. Yet these problems, too, are part of, and recognizable only on the basis of, the history of the event and the event as history – the event as the standard of that which is either true or false to it, the event as the standard of what is and is not loving. For the texts of all three thinkers contain within themselves the principles of the event, in light of which we are enabled to see in those texts what is not yet there and which nevertheless is not foreign to their texts. What we learn above all from each, then, is that we live in the history of the event and in the event as history, with all of its gifts and its myriad failures. That we thus move from, within, and towards the event, from, within, and towards what Nietzsche calls the intellectual conscience, what Derrida calls justice, what Kierkegaard calls the genuine contemporaneity of all human beings – within what all three would say is the history of learning to love – means that we can be not merely products but producers of history, that we can have not merely a past but a self-conscious relationship to our past. It is in doing so that we puncture – that we develop a critique of and learn to love in – the smooth flow of becoming.

## References

- Badiou, Alain. *Being and Event*. Translated by Oliver Feltham. Bloomsbury Publishing, 2007.
- Derrida, Jacques. *The Gift of Death*. Translated by David Wills. Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1995.
- . “The almost nothing of the unrepresentable.” In *Points*, edited by Elisabeth Weber, 78–88. Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1995.
- . *Specters of Marx*. Translated by Peggy Kamuf. Routledge: New York and London,

<sup>19</sup>Derrida, *The Gift of Death*, 7.

<sup>20</sup>Derrida, “The Almost Nothing of the Unrepresentable,” in *Points*, 83

<sup>21</sup>Nietzsche, *The Gay Science*, 262 (aphorism #334).

- 1994.
- . “The force of law.” In *Acts of Religion*, edited by Gil Anidjar. New York: Routledge, 2002.
- Hegel, G. W. F. *The Philosophy of History*. Translated by J. Sibree. New York: Dover Publications, 1956.
- . *Lectures on the Philosophy of Religion*, Volume III. Edited by Peter C. Hodgson. Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1985.
- Kierkegaard, Søren. *Fear and Trembling*. Translated by Howard V. Hong and Edna H. Hong. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1983.
- . *Philosophical Fragments*. Translated by Howard V. Hong and Edna H. Hong. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1985.
- . *The Concept of Irony*. Translated by Howard V. Hong and Edna H. Hong. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1989.
- . *Works of Love*. Translated by Howard V. Hong and Edna H. Hong. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1995.
- Nietzsche, Friedrich. *On the Genealogy of Morals*. Translated by Walter Kaufmann and R. J. Hollingdale. New York: Random House, 1967.
- . *The Gay Science*. Translated by Walter Kaufmann. New York: Random House, 1974.

---

Copyright © 2022 Kulak.

**Correspondence:** Avron Kulak, e: [akulak@yorku.ca](mailto:akulak@yorku.ca).

**Received:** 11 October, 2021.

**Accepted:** 9 November, 2021.

**Financial statement:** The scholarship for this article was conducted at the author’s own expense.

**Competing interests:** The author has declared no competing interests.

**How to cite:** Kulak, Avron. “Love in the smooth flow of becoming: on the history of the event and the event as history.” *Inscriptions* 5, no. 1 (January 2022): [46–55](#).

## Ereignis Institute

Ereignis Institute prepares the ground for enhanced perception and the good life. We provide short, incisive lectures available at your convenience, with optional readings and easy access to instructors. Our approach to the question of how to live well owes much to the ethical tradition from Epicurus: friendly to science, fiercely sense-oriented, and dedicated to the presumption that our actions are oriented towards achieving pleasure and peace of mind.

- Philosophies of life technologies: 12 week course module with Dr. Torgeir Fjeld €100.
- Ethics after Nietzsche's Genealogy of Morality I: Eight lectures with Dr. Mehdi Parsa €100.

[institute.ereignis.no/](http://institute.ereignis.no/)

### *Hedgehogs* by Christopher Norris

*Hedgehogs* is a sequence of poems and verse-essays about Jacques Derrida. Witty, ironic, reflective, discursive, and narrative in character Christopher Norris offers fresh points of engagement for philosophers and literary critics.

E-book €8.50 / Softbound €17.70

[utopos.tankebanen.no/](http://utopos.tankebanen.no/)

### Support independent publishing

*Inscriptions* is a peer-reviewed journal run and funded wholly by enthusiasts. While the journal is open access and free of author fees our beautiful print version can be ordered from our distributor. Support the journal by subscribing.

One year (two issues) €40

[inscriptions.tankebanen.no/](http://inscriptions.tankebanen.no/)